

UNICEF Bangladesh

Newsletter

Issue 25, June 2014

Harsh realities of slum children in Dhaka

At the heart of Dhaka's bustling city centre in Karwan Bazar, Tejgaon lies one of the most densely populated slums in the city. Nearly 5,000 families reside to pursue their dreams of making it in the capital.

This particular squatter sprang up on a land that belonged to the Railways Department surrounding the city's biggest wholesale vegetable and grocery market. People here live their lives on the edge. Dirty and dingy, the place buzzes with activity as trains zoom in and out at regular intervals and trucks from all over the country unload their supplies.

concern for things like schooling, personal hygiene (e.g. washing hands) and proper sanitation.

A close encounter with reality

"We have to pay Taka five (US\$ 0.065) for using the public toilets, Taka five (US\$ 0.065) for a litre of water, Taka five (US\$ 0.065) for taking a shower; nothing is free for us. We have no water supply, no proper sanitation facilities and no security. "Life here is appalling. Our children are aware of this reality and as such they learn to fend for themselves

early in life," says Sultan Ahmed, a resident of the slum and the father of three adolescent girls and a boy.

Twelve year old Sumi, the youngest daughter of Sultan, plays with her newborn niece while her sister-in-law Maleka, who is 16-years-old, chats with others in front of their shanty. "My husband drives a pickup. He is 17-years-old and my eldest sister-in-law Sharmin, who is my age, works at the chocolate factory nearby," says Maleka. She adds that Sharmin will be married off soon.

Sharmin comes home during her lunch break, "I work at the factory for Taka 3,500 (US\$ 46) a month so that my younger sister can go to school. I have to help my father because his income is not enough to meet the needs of our family here in the slums," Sharmin says.

Their other sister Sumaiya is 13-years-old and goes to Islamia Samity Shorkari Biddaloy. Most of the children and adolescents here pick vegetables that fall off the trucks during unloading and sell them. They also work as van pullers and day labourers.

Continued on page 5



(Centre) Minura, 16, plays a game of Ludo with her neighbours sitting in the middle of two rail tracks at Karwan Bazar Slum, Dhaka.

The adolescents here are rough and cocky and many are linked to juvenile delinquency and petty crime that this slum is notorious for. Minara, who is 16-years-old, and her gang of four play a hand of snakes and ladders sitting in the middle of two rail tracks and she shows little

In Focus: Adolescents

This edition focuses on adolescents to promote and protect their rights. Now is the time to invest in adolescence through appropriate budgeting and target setting as it is the most effective way to consolidate historic global gains.

Contents

IN FOCUS

FOCUS: ADOLESCENTS INVESTMENT FOR THE FUTURE	3
COLLECTIVE EFFORTS TO COMBAT SEXUAL HARASSMENT	4
THE CURSE OF THE DOWRY	6
CRICKET COACHING CLINIC INSTILLS HIV PREVENTION KNOWLEDGE AMONG ADOLESCENTS	8

IN THE FIELD

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE GOES UP AS SHUTTLE BOATS FERRY STUDENTS IN WATERY TERRAIN	10
HAND WASHING WITH SOAP BECOMING POPULAR IN REMOTE VILLAGES	12

WITH THNAKS

CANADA CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN IN BANGLADESH.....	15
--	----

SPEAK OUT

ADOLESCENTS TALK ABOUT CHALLENGES AND ASPIRATIONS	15
--	----

NEWS IN BRIEF.....	16
--------------------	----

Editor-in-Chief: Shima Islam

Editor: Arifa S. Sharmin

Editorial Contributor: Iftikhar Ahmed Chowdhury

Consultant: Afsan Chowdhury

Design & Layout: Syed Makhlesur Rahman

Photo Editor: Ahsan Khan

Writers: Raffat Binte Rashid, Kamrul Hasan, Maherin Ahmed,
Rad Rahman, Ahsan Khan

UNICEF is funded entirely through voluntary contributions. 'Regular' resources are unrestricted in their use, while 'other' resources are tied to specific programme funding. The staff and activities of the Communication, Advocacy and Partnerships section are supported by Regular Resources.

Q&A WITH UNICEF STAFF



Amy Delneuve,
Child Protection
Specialist

What are the key areas that you have worked in child protection?

I have had the opportunity to work in a variety of areas considered as child

protection. My career started as a volunteer in Mindanao in the Philippines working with children and young people with disabilities. From that experience, I moved on to work in one of the biggest refugee camps at that time, Site II on the Thai-Cambodian border, working with children in need of special protection.

I also worked in Cambodia and Thailand in rural areas and refugee settings. Later I joined UNICEF in Laos with the Child Protection Section and my work there involved developing community based child protection mechanisms. I also worked as the Mine Risk Education Focal Point, developed programmes to prevent children and their families from injuries due to unexploded ordnance.

What are the major challenges faced by adolescents in Bangladesh?

Adolescents, especially girls, face many challenges today in Bangladesh including abuse, exploitation and violence. These types of deprivations can have long lasting effects on girls' health, growth and development. For female adolescents, a major issue is the threat of child marriage which can have so many harmful repercussions. For both males and females, livelihood opportunities and employability are a challenge. In the area of education, the lack of access to middle and secondary schools can lead to low paid and sometimes even hazardous work.

How can the potential of adolescents be better utilised?

Adolescents are those between 10 and 19 years of age and in Bangladesh this means about 30 million people. They have a huge potential to act as agent of change and facilitate collective action within communities to reduce serious issues like child labour, child marriage and violence against women and children. In order to do that, they need information and life skills so they can make informed decisions and this is part of our job here at UNICEF – empowering adolescents to be positive change makers. □

FOCUS: ADOLESCENTS - INVESTMENT FOR FUTURE

Adolescents are neither young children nor adults, they are an age group in transition between dependency and productivity, between puberty and biological maturity. Adolescence is a critical time, the gateway to adulthood, and an opportunity to ensure that the generation has benefited from the significant progress of the last few decades.

Key Issues:

Poverty, inequity and geographical social disparity play a key role in the health, education and employment outcomes for adolescents as well as the conceptualisation by adults and adolescents themselves of whether they are 'children' or not.

Whilst progress for adolescents in Bangladesh has been attained by achieving near gender parity in primary and secondary enrolment, outcomes for adolescents- and particularly girls- living in remote rural areas and urban slums in Bangladesh vary widely.

Adolescent girls and child marriage

Although the legal age of marriage in Bangladesh is 18 for girls and 21 for boys, the Bangladesh Population Census 2011, estimates that 32.5 per cent of adolescent girls (aged 15-19 years) were married in 2011.

In Bangladesh, girls are considered eligible for marriage at the onset of menstruation. Boys, however, become ready for marriage only after several years of adolescence and young adulthood, which is often linked with financial independence. As adolescent girls enter puberty and their families begin to see them as adults instead of children, their lives become more restrictive. Other practices that exacerbate the situation include sexual harassment by males and the practice of paying dowry by the bride's family which is still common in Bangladesh although it is illegal.

Education and decent work

In terms of the relationship between education and work, the Government has set the age of admission to employment at 14 years with conditions and has taken legal steps to monitor admission to employment, light work and hazardous work. Despite this, the UNICEF, ILO Child Labour Report of 2011 states that 12 per cent of 7-14 years-old were in employment in 2006, whilst the UNICEF Child Equity Atlas states that six per cent of all early adolescents (aged 10-14 years) in Bangladesh are out-of-school and employed.

Adolescent mortality, morbidity and health-related behaviours

Lack of access to information and services and societal pressure to perform as adults notwithstanding, the

physical, mental and emotional changes they are undergoing, make adolescents particularly vulnerable to health risks, especially in the area of reproductive health.

Injuries and accidents

The Bangladesh Health and Injury Survey Report on Children (2005), found that injury accounted for 38 per cent of all classifiable deaths in children aged 1-17 years. In the part of later adolescence (aged 15-17 years) intentional injury (suicide, most often by poisoning) was the leading cause of fatal injury at the rate of 23.5/100,000 and was responsible for over half (57 per cent) of fatal injuries for this age group followed by animal bites, and transport injuries.

Adolescent nutrition

Among adolescent girls, 35 per cent are underweight rendering them vulnerable to disease, early death and increasing the likelihood of their children being stunted. Nutrition is inexorably linked to the persisting social norms embedded in gender inequity. Access to education, socio-economic group, age of marriage and first birth and control of key resources are crucial determinants of nutrition for adolescent girls and their children.

Tobacco, alcohol and drugs

Many people have their first experience with tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs during adolescence, partly out of a need to explore boundaries as they begin to develop their individuality. Injecting drug use is the primary immediate factor in the spread of HIV and AIDS in Bangladesh.

Adolescent sexual behaviour

Child marriage rates and adolescent birth rates indicate that many girls enter into sexual relationships during early adolescence in Bangladesh. Morbidity and mortality from unsafe abortions is common in Bangladesh.

The average annual abortion ratio in 1982-1998 for adolescents was 30 per 1,000 pregnancies, and more than 24 for adults. The abortion ratio of adolescents under 18 was much higher than that of 18 and 19-years-old.

Now is the time to invest in adolescence through appropriate budgeting and target setting as it is the most effective way to consolidate historic global gains achieved in early and middle childhood since 1990. □

Collective efforts to combat sexual harassment

Seven young boys in their late teens have formed a group to keep their area, the Duaripara slums in Mirpur of capital city Dhaka, safe. They have taken it upon themselves to ensure the safety of adolescent girls, who are increasingly becoming victims of sexual harassment and to protect the neighbourhood from any unforeseen mishaps.

Many hardships of adolescent girls

"If an adolescent girl is subject to sexual harassment her parents decide to marry her off as quickly as possible. This is because girls, who are harassed by boys on the streets, are either subjected to verbal abuse, kidnapping or fall prey to acid violence," says Mahmudur Rahman Shanto, a 17-year-old who works at a mobile servicing shop.

"Parents think marriage will give her the social security she otherwise lacks as an unmarried girl. But what they do not realise is that with child marriage comes hoards of trouble, namely lack of education, early pregnancy, malnourished children, domestic violence and the pressure of dowry all of which continue to perpetuate the inter-generational cycle of poverty. This is a harsh reality of the lives of adolescent girls in our society, especially those who live in the slums," Shanto relates.

"We are aware of these implications and thus we work to protect our community girls from these horrid realities," adds Tanvir Hossain Shohag, an 18-year-old who sells bamboo and wood for a living.

Adolescents act in a play to raise awareness on issues like sexual harassment within the community, Mirpur, Dhaka.

"Initially we talk sense to the boys who harass girls and if they refuse to listen, we take the matter to community elders who support our club activities. Together with the help from community elders we address the issue positively, without arguments," says Shah Jalal.

"If it comes to our notice that a sister of a friend, a garments factory worker, any school student, or even our club member is in trouble, we try our best to protect the girl and ward off the boys who are sexually harassing them. So far we have stopped two child marriages and a couple of harassment incidents," adds Shah Jalal.

These boys are members of the BRAC Kishori Club (Adolescent Club), which is a club for adolescent girls and boys between the ages of 11 to 18 years.

"We come to the club on Mondays and Tuesdays. The clubs are safe centres where adolescent girls and boys can read, socialise, play games, take part in cultural activities and have open discussions on personal and social issues with their peers," explains Mohammad Shah Jalal, an 18-year-old part-time technician.

"It is through these discussions on social issues that we became aware of the negative impact of sexual harassment, child marriage, and dowry," he continues.

Instilling good values

The club officers and organisers try to instil good values in boys who are living in the slums and otherwise vulnerable to delinquency.



The club is housed at a local primary school and meets twice a week from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. The purpose of this club is to help school drop-outs to stay motivated and focused and most importantly, to prevent child marriage. The club comprises of 80 per cent girls and 20 per cent boys. The criteria to be eligible for membership, the child must be a BRAC Primary graduate and an adolescent from a less fortunate background.

“Supported by UNICEF, the Adolescent Development Programme (ADP) started in 1993 as a subset of BRAC’s schools for older children. In order to retain the literacy rate and life skills that many girls and boys lose after primary schooling, the BRAC Education Programme opened Kishori Clubs giving adolescents the chance

to socialise, play indoor and outdoor games, perform cultural shows, read books, newspapers and exchange views, information, activities that were frowned upon in their homes; they also observe different international and national days,” explains Shamima Ara, Area Manager, ADP, BRAC.

“We strongly believe that if you are conscious then your community is conscious, which makes it easier to work out the differences and build a better society. □

This project is funded by the United Kingdom National Committee for UNICEF.

Harsh realities of slum children in Dhaka

Continued from page 1

They don’t go to school, although their younger siblings attend primary schools,” Sumaiya says.

“We have no idea what vocational training is, repairing mobile phones or electronics sounds like being engineers,” Sharmin laughs at the idea as her sisters giggle.

“Adolescents here have no access to proper schools, vocational training or any other opportunities. There are only a handful of boys who go to the Tejgaon College, but most of them drop out and drive cars or engage in some other work to increase their household income,” Maleka says.

“To support the education of my two younger daughters, I spend Taka 3,000 (US\$ 38.91) per child,” informs Sultan. He speaks sadly as his eldest son and daughter had to leave school to help the family.

A day in the lives of Chumki and her peers

It was late afternoon and the sky was bright orange dotted with clouds. Chumki, a 10-year-old girl, was resting on a bench. She was chatting with her friends when she heard the wail of an infant and she ran towards her shanty. A few minutes later, she came back carrying her youngest sister on her back. And her brief moment of personal time was over.

Chumki’s day begins at 6 a.m. when her mother, who is a domestic help, explains to Chumki her chores and responsibilities for the day before she heads out to work.

“Today I cooked rice, warmed up the fish curry from last night for my father, cleaned and swept my home, made the bed, washed the pots and pans and dirty clothes and now, I am baby sitting my two younger sisters. My mother will return from work and will cook our dinner. However, there are times when she is too tired to cook so I boil potatoes and cook vegetables for my family,” she describes.

The charming girl, has a responsible look about her. “I don’t go to school anymore. I learnt to write my name when I used to go to primary school, but that was before my sisters were born. My parents go to work, so who would look after them if I am not around to help my mother?,” Chumki asks while trying to calm her crying sister.

She lives in Uttara Jatrabari slum with 35 other families, where the inhabitants are either rickshaw pullers, day labourers, or domestic helps. The majority of adolescents there are out of school and working while younger children attend classes in local primary schools and madrassas (Islamic religious institutions).

Arifa, a shy 16-year-old, is an only child. She does not work or go to school; she stays at home with her mother and will be married off as soon as her mother is able to save enough money for her dowry.

Shahadat is a young boy of 15-years-old who works as a helper in a hotel and earns Taka 3,500 (US\$ 46) each month. He has five brothers and three sisters and has to work to help his parents support their huge family.

Sorry tales

There are thousands of big and small slums in Dhaka and thousands of children and adolescents live in these slums. Some of their lives have changed for the better with the help of non-government organisations working to ensure their basic rights to education, health and hygiene and security. However, many are less fortunate and live in appalling conditions.

For adolescents like Sharmin in Karwan Bazar slum or Shahadat in Uttara slum, the reality is the same. They had to give up their education to support their families and give their younger siblings an opportunity to go to school. □

The Curse of the Dowry

Two year old Yasin, starts his day by playing with his favorite toys - two yellow plastic badminton rackets and a cork. Seven people share one room where Yasin lives in Kamrangirchor, located in the forgotten outskirts of Dhaka surrounded by the Buriganga River. The room is dark, cold and damp, the light dangling from the ceiling flickers dimly in the cold winter morning when Yasin wakes up.

Only Liza, his mother's nine-year-old sister is next to him and she hands him his toys quickly so that she can stay in bed for a few more minutes. Rozina, Yasin's 18-year-old mother is too busy to change his pants as he has wet the bed where they all had been sleeping. She only has a few minutes to splash some water on her face and rush to work at a nearby garments factory.

Within minutes, Rozina's sister and her father are off to work too. Yasin is left alone with his grandmother even before he can cry, because he misses his mother.

Barely awake in bed, his grandmother and his two aunts are too sleepy to play with him. Yasin looks to his grandmother, hoping she would entertain him with a few games of badminton.

Married at adolescence

Rozina was married when she was only 14-years-old. By 16, Yasin was already born, but the relationship soon turned sour between Rozina and her husband.

Rozina's father Kasem had agreed to her marriage, because his relatives told him that the man who wanted to marry his daughter was a good person. He tried his best to please the young man by giving him a fan, a bed, a television and money Taka 25,000 (US\$ 325) as dowry. "At the time, we thought she would have a better future with him. We wanted what was best for her," says Kasem.

Within months, however, Rozina's husband started beating her. He neglected her even when she fell ill, and often left her for days when he went gambling with his new found wealth. Even after their son was born, Rozina's husband continued to beat her, and kept on asking her family for more money.

Rozina dared not tell her parents about his ill-treatment, because she knew that her family was already in debt from the loans they had to pay for her dowry Taka 60,000 (US\$ 778.21) and it would all be in vain if her marriage fell apart.

The burden of loans

Rozina finally moved back with her parents a year after Yasin was born, unable to bear this acute level of domestic violence. Her family saw the scars on her body and realized too late that they had pushed her to devastation.

Now, Rozina works in a garments factory to help her father pay back the loans he took out for her marriage. She works six days a week and makes Taka 2,200 (US\$ 29) a month - barely enough to allow her family to pay the rent as well as part of the loans. She has very little time to spare for her son.

Her younger sister Salma, who is



(Left) Yasin, 2, plays by himself while his mother and grandfather eat lunch during their break from work in Kamrangirchor, Dhaka

13-years-old, is already working in a factory making photo-frames. She can't afford to go to school, because she has to contribute to her family's income. She repeats what she often hears others say at school, "The poor don't need to study."

Only Liza, her nine-year-old sister goes to school. Even then, her time is running out. Once she completes her pre-primary school, she too has to help the family pay back the debt they incurred while making payments for her sister's dowry.

Three generations of struggle

Elsewhere in Kamrangirchor, there are more adolescents who are victims of child marriage. Neepa, a 17-year-old girl was married a year ago, when her parents felt she was facing frequent sexual harassment on the streets.

Though Neepa has not been subjected to physical abuse, her education was cut short, and she was married off to an older man from a better off family. During the marriage, her family gave a dowry of Taka 20,000 (US\$ 260), gold, furniture and other items.

For Neepa's family too, the loans came as a curse. Her mother has to work long hours at a metal factory to make ends meet. There she is joined by Neepa's grandmother, who too has to work if they have any hope of paying back the loans.

Her sister Deepika also has to contribute. She makes artificial ornaments and sells every 100 pieces for Taka 50 (US\$ 0.65). All work to repay their loans.

"I will do everything I can to make sure that she does not get married at an early age like me," says Neepa about her sister.

Learning from mistakes

Deepika has learnt about the hardships that come with child marriage. She has seen it at home, as well as from being a member of an adolescent group, where she is a peer leader.

Her struggles at home have given her a voice to speak out against child marriage, and she is determined to help others escape it as well. Often, members of her group will get together and perform plays in the neighbourhood, warning people living in the community against child marriage.

Arafat, a member of her adolescent group says, "I won't marry until I am well established as an engineer." Other male members of the adolescent group also share his enthusiasm.

In many families where there has been a child marriage, parents understand that no good can come of it. Often though, it comes at the price of the eldest daughter whose ill fate helps parents realize that they had made a mistake.

Like others, Kasem has seen the hardships brought on by his eldest daughter's child marriage. He wishes he could send all his daughters to school. "I won't make the same mistake with them as I did with Rozina," he insists. □



Neepa's mother Rabeya Begum works in a metal factory in Kamrangirchor, Dhaka.

© UNICEF/BANA2014-00079/Ahsan Khan

Cricket Coaching Clinic Instills HIV Prevention Knowledge Among Adolescents

While the ICC World T20 matches were going on in full swing in Bangladesh, considerable cricket insignia was found alongside the streets. On the road to Maona from Dhaka which is about 28 km north-west of the capital, children and adolescents were seen, hitting cricket balls with wicker bats, adding to the air of excitement that took the country by storm.

Bangladesh hosted its first cricket clinic during the ICC World T20 2014 in March, providing essential knowledge about cultivating cricket skills to 80 underprivileged adolescents. These adolescents, aged between 14 and 17-years-old, were selected from across the country. They participated in an intensive sports-based HIV and AIDS prevention training that focused on integrating key HIV prevention messages into sports drills while they acquire skills to improve their physical fitness, bowling, fielding and batting.

Teamed together with four coaches from the Bangladesh Cricket Board, one trainer, and one physiotherapist, the 80 participants enjoyed a rigorous training session. Through these sessions they received messages ranging from the importance of eliminating stigma related to HIV and AIDS, key HIV and AIDS prevention information and the need to be hardworking.

Awareness messages on HIV was instilled into the programme creatively as part of the "THINK WISE" campaign of the ICC T20 World Cup. ICC has reached out to the cricketing fraternity to work together in responding to the global AIDS crisis.

The partnership seeks to educate cricket players, coaches, commentators, broadcasters, volunteers and spectators about the AIDS epidemic, particularly around prevention and stigma issues. Around 10 million people living with HIV are from Test-playing nations. This number accounts for more than a quarter of all the people across the world that are HIV-positive and a sizeable portion of these people live in South Asia.

"One of the activities we conducted was passing a ball around behind our backs, and asking the adolescents to guess who had the ball. The ball was a symbol of how luck plays a great hand in the contraction of HIV. We have had additional games which we use to showcase how HIV cannot be contracted from speaking or engaging with HIV victims," says Thomas Jufri-Robson, from the Asian Sports Academy Foundation, a trainer working to develop the sports-based HIV and AIDS prevention training programme.

Thinking wisely and dreaming big

"I never knew that I would not get HIV by interacting with someone who has it. I just cannot wait to convey

this message back to my community in Dinajpur," says Anwara, aged 16 years. "The knowledge we have gained is very powerful, and it is not just limited to sports, but how we can be responsible human beings."

Another participant, Mong Achak, aged 15 years, says, "Interacting with such world class players has made me realize how beautiful the world is. I now realize that I must dream big, and that hard work will help me achieve any goals."

One of the most significant and crucial goals of the programme was to convey to children that there are alternatives to detrimental social behaviours such as intravenous drug usage.

Dipu Rai Chowdhury, former player of the Bangladesh cricket team, and one of the coaches says, "This initiative allows our children to realize that there are several others like them all over Bangladesh, and that they can become their community ambassadors and leaders on issues that truly matter."

Jinnatul Nesa Pinky, aged 17 from Panchagar district, agrees, "I live in an extended family of 23 children, and have seven brothers and sisters. I always wanted to play cricket, but until last year, I never thought I would be able to. Now, I am not only learning from world class coaches, but I cannot wait to bring the messages about both cricket and HIV back to our community."

Pinky, who struggled with her bowling prior to the cricket clinic, adds, "I feel more confident now, and that is something all of us feel. Also, I now have friends from all over Bangladesh who love cricket. We know that with our passion and knowledge for the sport, as well as the information we have gained about life, we can go back to our communities and teach others, both about HIV, and about cricket."

Cricket superstars impact positive social behaviour

Meanwhile, on a hot March day in Savar, the participants of the cricket clinic had a unique opportunity to both play with and learn from players from the female international cricketers. Team members from various teams, including India, Australia, and Ireland, played with the adolescents, giving them essential tips on the game.

"I'm glad to have been given this opportunity to counsel children in Bangladesh. At a young age, cricket is supposed to be both fun and interesting, and I think it helps to convey to them that they should always aim high in their career goals," says Clare Shillington. She teaches cricket in Ireland.

Shillington adds, "Scouting out talent at an early age allows countries to cultivate such talent, and it's great to

see young children playing in Bangladesh.” The youngest female player on the Irish cricket team, Elena Tice, is 14-years-old.

Mithali Raj of the Indian cricket team spent a significant amount of time batting and catching balls with various school children. She emphasized that in order to cultivate positive social behaviour, it is important to take up a sport like cricket.

“Playing with adolescents is always fun. Usually when adolescents play, they showcase their natural abilities. Some are quick at grasping things, and as professionals, we tend to identify these easily, and it’s good to see women cricketers playing sports,” says Raj.

Inspiring female participation in sports

Purnima Rao, cricket coach for the Indian female team and captain of India during three World Cups, adds, “Sports encourages children to channel their energy and find balance. When I was growing up, there was a stigma against women playing cricket, but I know I did better in my studies when I took up the sport. It’s important to

maintain a healthy balance, and I’m honoured to be able to share this important lesson by playing with these children.”

“I am proud of being a woman cricketer,” says Rao. “I am really happy to see the clinic included so many women, as this is a reflection of how women’s cricket is being encouraged worldwide.”

Assistant Coach Tim Coyle of the Australian cricket team, spent over an hour personally teaching the cricket clinic participants how to bat and ball effectively. “We like to support the dreams of youth, because if you tell a child at a young age that he cannot do something, he will spend his whole life thinking that he cannot do it.”

Australia is defending its title as two-time champions of the ICC T20 World Cup this year. Seeing the progress of the children in the field, many of the cricket players stopped their training to cheer children’s progress. Coyle adds, “Some of these children have true potential, and it’s great to work with raw talent.”

This project is funded by UNICEF’s Regular Resources.

Participants meet players from the Ireland women’s team at BKSP (national sports training institute). Bangladesh hosted its first cricket clinic providing essential knowledge about HIV and cultivating cricket skills to 80 underprivileged adolescents.

© UNICEF/BANA2014-00839/Kiron



School Attendance Goes Up as Shuttle Boats Ferry Students in Watery Terrain

Just over a year ago fifth grader Sourav Chakma navigated the narrow trails through green hilly terrain every morning, without knowing if he would get a boat ride to school across the lake on time.

Sourav, 10-years-old, is top performing student of his class at a primary school in the southeastern hill district of Rangamati. But his poor father does not own a boat, the only transport for thousands of people living in the 356-square-mile Kaptai Lake area.

Difficult terrain, difficult life

The lake is unreliable and often dangerous for boating due to its unpredictable nature. During the six months of the monsoon, water swells to high levels, making it riskier for the children to operate small, country boats to attend schools.

The situation contributes to a high rate of absenteeism at up to 30 per cent against the national average of 14 per cent. While national level enrollment rates appear on track to meet Millennium Development Goal 2 - achieving universal primary education, the district remains among the lowest performers.

Not having a boat of his own meant Sourav was pretty much left at the mercy of other boats passing by for daily rides to and from Golachhari Government Primary School,

which is situated on a hilltop surrounded by the lake water.

"The school is not very far from my home, but I had to wait for other boats to pass by and ask them for a ride. So, I was often late to school and even missed it too," Sourav says.

"My uncle, who lives separately with his family, has a boat, but that is no help as he is out with the boat early morning every day for fishing," he adds.

Child-friendly schools

Sourav is not alone. Thousands of students from scores of primary schools in the lake area have almost similar stories to share. Up to 70 per cent of primary school-goers in the lake area are dependent on boats.

But thanks to a UNICEF-supported project more than 1,000 student like Sourav from six schools in three sub-districts surrounded by the lake in Rangamati now have motorized shuttle boats. Those boats carry them to and from their schools everyday.

Another 16 more shuttle boats are expected to be distributed soon among 16 schools. With 22 shuttle boats, a total of nearly 2,075 students will benefit.



Students make their way to a shuttle boat after classes in Golachhari village, Rangamati

© UNICEF/BANA2014-00338/Mawa



Sourav Chakma, 10, with his mother in Godapara village, Rangamati

The shuttle boats are a part of a spectrum of interventions under the 'Child Friendly Schools' programme. The aim of the programme is to increase access to basic primary education and learning opportunities for hard-to-reach children and their families living in the isolated, remote areas of the lake.

Started in 2012, the other interventions, according to varying needs of the 22 schools, include water and sanitation facilities, school health camps, awareness-raising activities for the community, supply of hygiene and sanitation kits and swimming lessons. Training programmes for teachers are also arranged so that they can teach students on health and nutrition.

With an aim to facilitate computer aided learning, each School-based Resource Centre is equipped with two computers, internet access, and solar panels for power supply have also been set up at six schools.

"The locally-manufactured boats equipped with lifesaving devices are made from eco-friendly materials. The boats, each having capacity to carry 16 children and two adults with an average longevity of 15 years are unsinkable," says Dhana Moni Chakma, coordinator of the project.

"Removing difficulties that stand in the way of school-goers is a key goal of the project. In a bid to turn the school environment in favour of the children, equipping the schools with the shuttle boats is a big step," he adds.

Improved academic performance

Sourav's attendance rate has gone up since the shuttle boat started operating. The overall attendance rate has increased to around 150 students, 70 per cent whom depend on the boat service.

"Students enjoy the friendly environment at the school due to this combined set of interventions. They are more regular in school thanks to the shuttle boat," Supriti Chakma, the Head teacher acknowledges.

Delwar Hossain is a fourth grader at another school, Killapahar Government Primary School, where pupils' average attendance rate has increased to 95 per cent in 2013 from 70 per cent a year ago.

"Earlier, I was very irregular, which ultimately had a negative impact on my exams results. I held 25th position at my third grade. But since last year, I am regular at school because of the shuttle boat and I came out as top of the class at the end of grade three final exams in December 2013," Delwar says.

Erfan Sharif, Chief Executive of Rangamati Hill District Council says the initiative has created enthusiasm among the teachers and student as it came as a change-maker in the traditional school environment. □

This project is funded by United States Fund for UNICEF.

Hand-Washing with Soap Becoming Popular in Remote Villages



© UNICEF/BANA2014-00486/Mawa

Community members watch an Interactive Popular Theatre group performance designed to raise awareness about hand-washing at Rowa village in Sullah, Sunamganj

It is a sunny day in winter as scores of people, mostly women and children, gather underneath a canopy in remote Rowa village in the northeastern district of Sunamganj. They are waiting for a theatre show to begin. They will enjoy a show on correct ways of hand-washing.

As the show kicks off, an elderly man carrying an aluminum water pot in one hand and a walking stick on the other appears from a latrine. A group of young men who happen to be passing by watch the man wash his left hand with only water from the pot.

"Dadu (grandpa)! Do you not wash both your hands with soap after using toilet every time," one of the young men asks the elderly man.

Washing hands with soap after defecation is something the senior citizen had never heard of and thought of doing. So he wields his stick in a threatening manner amid loud laughter and applause from the audience.

A behaviour seldom practiced

There is nothing strange in the ignorance of this protagonist, whose character has been drawn from actual examples from rural Bangladesh. One-third of the country's 154 million people live below the poverty line and most do not wash their hands with soap after defecation, a major cause of diarrhoeal disease.

Bangladesh is among the 10 countries in the world to report the largest number of child deaths due to diarrhoea, according to a study by UNICEF and WHO. Approximately 50,800 under-five children die annually in the country from diarrhoeal diseases.

Research shows that washing hands with soap is a highly cost-effective health practice that can reduce the incidence of diarrheal diseases by over 40 per cent. Yet, despite its life-saving potential, hand-washing with soap is seldom practiced.

After failing to satisfy Dadu, the young men call in the most educated and respected man of the village, a school teacher, in order to convince him on the important of washing your hands with soap at three critical times.

The character, who plays the school teacher, explains to Dadu that washing both hands with soap and clean water after defecation and cleaning a baby's bottom, before feeding children and handling food is very important.

Communication tools

The show staged by a local Interactive Popular Theatre group is one of the communication tools under a UNICEF-supported programme, 'Engaging Communities for Social and Behavioural Change'. Its objective is to raise awareness by increasing the knowledge level of

community people and motivate them to practice key child survival and useful behaviours in three sub-districts in Sunamganj.

The other tools include individual home visits, courtyard sessions, adolescent club meetings, tea stall sessions and issue-based discussions facilitated by project officials.

The drama group leader, Bijoy Chakrabarty, says their shows are easy to understand. "The audience, especially children and women, like them a lot."

"We have open interactive sessions in every show, where we hold hand washing demonstrations and the audience can ask questions," Bijoy adds.

Gaining the footing

During the initial days when they began staging such shows more than a year ago, people used to laugh at them, because the messages they were delivering weren't something which people thought were significant. But soon the audience grew and they realized its significance and started to apply the knowledge in real life.

Syedul Hoque Milky, Communication for Development Officer, UNICEF Sylhet, says "The programme is aimed at bringing about changes in the people's behaviour by raising their awareness."

"It is good to see that more and more people are now moving to the practice level from the knowledge level," Syedul says.

Courtyard sessions for mothers and adolescent club meetings for young girls and boys are also regularly held in every village of the project area on hand washing with the help of the officials, called Promoters, who work in the village.

Rinkon Rani Das, is 26-years-old and one of the promoters working in Rowa village. Skilled in interpersonal communication and trained in useful key knowledge and harmful social norms for children, she also conducts house-to-house visits.

"By just washing your hands properly with soap and clean water we can keep our hands clean and families free from diseases like diarrhea, pneumonia, typhoid, jaundice, dysentery, and flu," Rinkon says to a group of 15 adolescent boys and girls.

The motivated villagers have installed a dozen hand washing devices at different points in the village to ensure easy access to clean water and soap for everyone, at their own cost.

Jolly Rani Das, six-years-old and a grade one student at the village primary school, says she washes her hands after using toilet and before eating as her mother asked her to.

"I do it at my school too as there is a place to wash my hands. The other students also do it," Jolly confirms. □

This project is funded by UNICEF's Regular Resources.



Rinkon Rani Das, a Ward Promoter, speaks at a meeting on hand washing issues attended by adolescents at Rowa village in Sullah, Sunamganj.

Canada Creating Opportunities for Children in Bangladesh

The objective of Canada's international development programme in Bangladesh is to create opportunities for children and youth and to stimulate sustainable economic growth.

UNICEF and its long standing partner Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD) recently joined forces to support the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) in contributing towards achieving the goals set by the Health, Population, Nutrition Sector Development Programme (HPNSDP). The partnership helps to increase the availability and utilization of quality maternal, new-born, child health and nutrition services.

Canada has been supporting the Joint GoB-UN Maternal and Neonatal Health Initiative (MNHI) since March 2011 for accelerating progress towards maternal and neonatal mortality and morbidity reduction in 11 low-performing districts of Bangladesh. The project is being implemented by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare with

technical assistance from UNICEF and two other UN agencies, UNFPA and WHO. DFATD, Canada provided Cdn\$ 19.7 million (US\$ 18.2 million) for this project for a period of five years from March 2011 to June 2016.

Key UNICEF supported innovations are, developing and implementing evidence-based and resource-backed local level MNH plans with local recruitment of health personnel, establishing Special Care Newborn Units, demonstrating and scaling up maternal and perinatal death review within existing health systems, demonstrating voice and accountability in MNH interventions and engaging community health volunteers to create demand for services.

Improving Health and Nutrition for Hard-to-Reach Mothers and Young Children

The joint partnership of the Canadian DFATD has given another Cdn\$ 19.8 million (US\$ 18.2 million) to UNICEF to support maternal, newborn and child health services over a period of five years (March 2013 to December 2017) under the project "Improving Health and Nutrition for Hard-to-Reach Mothers and Young Children".

This is being implemented to reduce maternal, neonatal and under-five mortality and morbidity, and improve child growth and development in selected districts through increasing and sustaining vaccine coverage, introducing new vaccines and strengthening health systems with increased availability of as well as access to quality maternal, neonatal, child health and nutrition services. The project is operating at both national and sub-national levels with special attention to low-performing districts and hard-to-reach areas among 20 most vulnerable districts as selected by UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).

Strengthening immunization

Through the 'Immunization strengthening project' Canada provided Cdn\$ 11.8 million (US\$ 10.8 million) to UNICEF for providing support in the area of immunization, which is one of the most cost-effective programmes to reduce infant and child morbidity and mortality over a period of three years [March 2011 to June 2014]. The project is being implemented through Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MOHFW) in improving cold storage capacity, broadening coverage and increasing the range of vaccinations. □



© UNICEF/BANA2012-02048/Noorani

Chaya Rani adds Micronutrients Powder to food for her daughter Nishimoni, 15 months old, at their home in Jamalpur.

Canada

Adolescents Talk about Challenges and Aspirations

"It is good to earn for your family after completing studies, but it is not easy to study and work at the same time. It may affect your grades. I want to be an advocate when I grow up." - **Ava Rani, 15**



"It is easy to listen to your friends and start taking drugs. I think it is important to have good friends around you. I want to work in a bank one day and make a good living for myself." - **Shumon Kumar, 17**



"I am often teased by boys when I walk on the streets. My mother tells me to walk quickly and not pay any attention to them. It makes me feel very uncomfortable." - **Santa Rani Dey, 15**



"I want to learn computer science. If I learn it properly I will run a software company that will earn lots of money for any country." - **Safi Hossin, 17**



"Child marriage is harmful for girls because they don't understand what is going on in the world. I want to become a nurse when I am older." - **Amena Akhtar, 15**



"Parents do not see boys and girls equally. Boys are allowed to go out without any reason, but girls are not allowed to go out even when they have a good reason. Even in work, girls receive unfair treatment because they are girl." - **Sumi Akhtar, 15**



"Not having jobs is the biggest problem in our country because this can lead to drug addiction and involvement in crime and hijacking" - **Ariful Islam, 16**



"I cannot continue school because we are poor. I want to learn tailoring and start my own business. I used to work in a garments factory, but I had to stop because I often fell ill." - **Priyanka Dey, 18**



Shakib inspires youngsters to 'Think Wise' about HIV

National cricket idol and THINK WISE champion for Bangladesh – Shakib Al Hasan – reemphasized his commitment to continue his fight to save young people by inspiring them to 'think wise' and to take the right decision about HIV.

As part of awareness campaign on HIV and Aids, he said this during a press conference in Dhaka on March 11, 2014 in presence of the International Cricket Council, Bangladesh Cricket Board, UNICEF and UNAIDS officials ahead of the 2014 ICC World T20 Tournament in Bangladesh.

"We know that HIV and AIDS is present in every continent and that cricket can be a very powerful force against social stigma, ignorance and discrimination – factors that contribute to increased vulnerability to HIV infection," said Shakib.

Before joining the press conference, Shakib also played cricket with adolescents suffering from HIV/AIDS at their practice ground as part of the initiative.

"The campaign, assisted by prominent cricketers around the world such as Shakib, have been doing a lot of good work to raise awareness about HIV prevention –



(Right to left) Dhiraj Malhotra, Tournament Director, ICC World T20 Bangladesh 2014, Pascal Villeneuve, Representative, UNICEF Bangladesh, Shakib Al Hasan, THINK WISE Champion, Leo Kenny, Country Director, UNAIDS, Bangladesh and Dr. Husain Sarwar Ahsan Khan, Line Director National AIDS/STD Programme, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Bangladesh attend a press conference as part of the THINK WISE campaign in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

The ace all-rounder of international cricket advocated for open sharing of knowledge and accurate information flow on HIV and AIDS transmission and prevention at all levels of society, includes schools, clubs and media in order to develop an appropriate national response to HIV threat.

He also said that South Asia in particular is at risk of HIV and AIDS as the lack of awareness and general ignorance in the region is far greater than anywhere else.

encouraging people, especially adolescents and young people, to make the right choices and to seek help and advice about how to protect themselves," said UNICEF Representative, Pascal Villeneuve during the press conference.

The 2014 ICC World T20 Tournament in Bangladesh took place from March 16 to April 6, 2014 and it provided an ideal platform to reach out to cricket fans with 'THINK WISE' messaging on HIV and AIDS. □

To subscribe or unsubscribe to this newsletter,
or to send comments to the editor, please email:
infobangladesh@unicef.org

UNICEF Bangladesh
BSL Office Complex, 1, Minto Road, Dhaka 1000
Bangladesh

For more information
about UNICEF Bangladesh,
or to download this newsletter,
please visit:
www.unicef.org.bd